**[Social Importance of Rebel Without a Cause](http://rwac-socialimportance.blogspot.com/2008/10/social-importance-of-rebel-without.html)**

Many films and actors influence social aspects of their time. Rebel Without a Cause is a great example of a movie which had a social impact on its time due to its material. Starring James Dean in 1955, Rebel Without a Cause disrupted the social belief that home, community and school are the kind places they are meant to be for a normal teenage upbringing. In modern times a film like this is considered common but in 1955, it drew much attention because the social barriers it broke concerning these institutions.

Debuting in 1955, Rebel Without a Cause was a great success, which might come off as a shock to some seeing as how it was so against what the 1950’s stood for. The 1950’s was about unity of the community, a nice house, and everyone getting along and being happy, not in a hippie way but in a more utopian way. This movie went against these aspects with its main character Jim Stark and the town’s teenage youth. Jim was the epitome of a punk in his day. He starts off the movie by being an underage drunk, and disrespectful to authority figures, which was unheard of at the time. He smoked cigarettes, raced cars, got into knife fights, and would storm out of his parent’s house whenever the time was right. These are all important aspects of the movie because according to the ideals of the era, they show how a teen should not act. Jim was a bad boy and one reason people liked the character so much was because this was a new type of role; the bad boy teenager was new to this time. Concerning the issue of parenting and gender roles, out of his parents his mother was more the head of the house, since the father was always trying to please her, a complete turnaround to the idea that the father should be the strong willed caretaker of the family. The movie really brings out the issue of blossoming teenage rebellion during the 1950’s which some believe made way for the counterculture of the 1960’s, and all of this is opposite the utopian society/ community people had imagined during the time.  
  
The shock factor was not the only thing the film had going for it. James Dean, the leading actor, of the film played the role of the rebellious teenager perfectly. His tone of voice, his movement, even when he wasn’t saying anything, it was all spot on. According to Slocum “Dean’s galvanizing use of ‘method’ acting [(acting technique in which actors try to replicate real life emotional conditions under which the character operates)(Method Acting)] broke through conventions of Hollywood performance to reveal what many perceived as the ‘authentic’ pain and alienation felt by teenagers” (Senses of Cinema). The anger and sadness came out of Dean so realistically, for example, when he was crying over Plato’s death and grabs his father’s leg crying, and when he gets angry at his father’s inability to be decisive in answering a question and leaves the house. Overall there really are no complaints to be made on Dean’s performance in the film, his body language, tone, and facial expressions where right where they needed to be to portray his character effectively.  
  
In Conclusion, Rebel Without a Cause was a great movie. “It sought to portray the existing decay of youth in middle America, critique parental style, and expose the rift between two generations”(Rebel Without a Cause), and that it did. It’s shocking material and attacks on society’s values (teenage life, gender roles, and community) had a direct impact of the society in which it critiqued. The shock value along with James Dean’s stunning performance as Jim Stark led to a great film of its era.

"Rebel Without a Cause." Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia. 5 Oct. 2008 .  
  
Slocum, David J. "Rebel Without a Cause." Senses of Cinema. 4 Oct. 2008 .